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How did the book of Isaiah come to be ? We don't know, and neither will this contribution be able to answer this question with satisfactory completeness. However, our basic ignorance does not compel us to be silent. If we are not able to answer some questions fully, this does not mean that we cannot answer them partially or gain some insight that contributes to their clarification, as Wellhausen held:

"Konstruiren muss man bekanntlich die Geschichte immer. . . . Der Unterschied ist nur, ob man gut oder schlecht konstruirt."[1]	"As is generally known, history has always to be construed. . . . The difference is, however, whether one construes well or poorly."

This paper will start by recounting some recent developments in methodology in the study of the prophetic books that contribute to the reconstruction of the formation of the early book of Isaiah.[2] Then, one crucial text, Isa 8:1–8, shall be discussed, in order to describe the noteworthy scribal characteristics of an early prophetic text. This will form the basis of my attempt to show that the scribal features of this text can be understood only by taking the theological perspective of the book of Isaiah into account, because it links Judah's fate to Israel's destiny, reinterpreting Judah as

[1] Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (3d ed.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1886), 383; English translation mine.

[2] A different version of this paper will be published in German in the Congress Volume of the 2013 IOSOT in Munich. This text was delivered as a lecture at Yale Divinity School on Nov 18, 2012. I am most grateful to Joel Baden, John J. Collins, Steven Fraade, Robert Wilson, and especially Hindy Najman for their hospitality.

"Israel" in broader terms. This identification of Judah as "Israel" affects the book of Isaiah in many ways, especially in its extension of the prophecy of Amos, which seems to have been taken up by Isaiah and applied to Judah as well. The main theological problem resulting from this position was that at least some Judeans could—and probably did—say that Isaiah's prophecy of doom was proven wrong by the events of 701 BCE. This difficult situation was apparently crucial for the formation of the book of Isaiah, that is, for its particular theological perspective, and for its scribal codification.

1. New Insights from Recent Scholarship on Isaiah and the Prophets

The starting point for this paper arises from four prominent insights from recent scholarship on the prophets that have been met, at least in their basic outline, with general acceptance.

The first concerns the argument put forth especially in the work of Odil Hannes Steck, Jörg Jeremias, Erhard Blum, Reinhard Kratz, Ben Sommer, and others with regard to the peculiar nature of *written* prophecy in ancient Israel and Judah: written prophecy is more and something else than merely just recorded oral prophecy.[3] Or, in other words: written prophecy is scribal prophecy. I think it is

[3] Odil Hannes Steck, *Die Prophetenbücher und ihr theologisches Zeugnis: Wege der Nachfrage und Fährten zur Antwort* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996); Erhard Blum, "Jesajas prophetisches Testament: Beobachtungen zu Jes 1–11 (Teil I)," *ZAW* 108 (1996), 547–568, esp. 549–50 and n. 15 (for further literature); Jörg Jeremias, "Das Rätsel der Schriftprophetie," *ZAW* 125 (2013), 93–117; idem, "Das Proprium der alttestamentlichen Prophetie," in *Hosea und Amos: Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheton* (ed. idem; FAT 13; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 20–33 (= idem, "The Essence of OT Prophecy," *TD* 53 [2006], 41–49); idem, "Prophetische Wahrheit im Wandel der Geschichte," in *Viele Wege zu dem Einen: Historische Bibelkritik – die Vitalität der Glaubensüberlieferung in der Moderne* (ed. S. Beyerle, et al; BTSt 121; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2012), 61–81; Reinhard G. Kratz, "Die Redaktion der Prophetenbücher," in idem, *Prophetenstudien: Kleine Schriften II* (FAT 74; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 32–48, esp. 39–40; idem, *Die Propheten Israels* (Beck'sche Reihe 2326; München: Beck, 2003), 41–51; idem, " Das Rätsel der Schriftprophetie: Eine Replik," ZAW 125 (2013), 635–639; Uwe Becker, "Die Wiederentdeckung des Prophetenbuches:

necessary to apply this insight more deeply to the beginnings of the Isaiah tradition than has yet taken place. The book of Isaiah is not just a randomly organized florilegium of prophetic words, but a meaningful, though complex, arrangement of different texts. It is not always clear whether they existed previously as self-contained "small units." They may go back to oral predecessors, but their literary shape and collection already demonstrates a very fundamental transformation of that alleged original shape. Of course, there are also many inner-biblical expansions of earlier material in the prophetic books. These texts are not simply extraneous additions, but are often understandable as *interpretations* of the earlier text. In other words, the redaction history of the prophetic books is not a tale of marginal and superfluous comments added to the text. These comments, rather, lay bare a text's inner-biblical reception history.[4]

If one is tempted to lament over the fact that the prophetic books also include later additions, then it should be remembered that the ongoing process of updating and reinterpretation in the prophetic books provided nothing less than the necessary condition for the survival of these books. An ancient leather or papyrus roll normally lasted no longer than 200–300 years under normal conditions. Without the ongoing written reception, we would know nothing of Isaiah at all. Therefore, the very existence of secondary texts in the prophets need not be seen as an awkward problem,

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Tendenzen und Aufgaben der gegenwärtigen Prophetenforschung," *BTZ* 21 (2004), 30–60; Christof Hardmeier, "Verkündigung und Schrift bei Jesaja: Zur Entstehung der Schriftprophetie als Oppositionsliteratur im alten Israel," in *Erzähldiskurs und Redepragmatik im Alten Testament: Unterwegs zu einer performativen Theologie der Bibel* (ed. idem: FAT 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 229–42. For an empirically observable case of scribal prophecy from the sixth century B.C.E., see Udo Rüterswörden, "Der Prophet in den Lachisch-Ostraka," in *Steine – Bilder – Texte: Historische Evidenz außerbiblischer und biblischer Quellen* (ed. C. Hardmeier; Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte 5; Leipzig: EVA, 2001), 179–92. Cf. also Martti Nissinen, "Spoken, Written, Quoted, and Invented: Orality and Writtenness in Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy," in *Writings and Speech in Israelite and Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy* (eds. E. B. Zvi and M. H. Floyd; SBLSS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 235–71.

[4] Cf. Steck, *Prophetenbücher*, esp. 141–42 n. 27.

which was the nineteenth-century scholarly view. Scholars, with such an attitude, aimed at "cleansing" the present prophetic books from later additions in order to get back to the true and pure message of the prophets themselves.

In contrast to this view, the vitality of the prophetic tradition in the biblical period itself ensured the survival of the prophetic heritage as such, and it is through this long process of textual enrichment and interpretation that the prophetic books obtained their literary and theological quality. Apparently, the prophetic oracles were never understood to be historically limited to their times of origin. In the eyes of the early recipients, the prophets spoke *in* their time, but not only *to* their time—a fact highlighted long ago by Koch and Hermisson and, more recently, by Robert Wilson.[5] Their words implicitly meant more than the prophet himself intended; their meaning could be defined afresh and made appropriate for each new age. It is this very quality of the prophetic oracles that is one of the reasons they are still being read in Jewish and Christian communities.

The second point concretizes the first and concerns the interactions of the prophetic texts in the book of Isaiah with other biblical texts and traditions. There are many observations to be made here, but I would focus especially on what Erhard Blum has emphasized: that the early Isaiah tradition cannot be understood adequately without taking into account its interaction with the book of Amos.[6] This basic

[5] See Hans-Jürgen Hermisson, "Zeitbezug des prophetischen Wortes," *KD* 27 (1981), 96–110; Steck, *Prophetenbücher*, esp. 147–49; Robert Wilson, "Scribal Culture and the Composition of the Book of Isaiah," in *The Bible as a Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God Through Historically Dissimilar Traditions* (ed. R. Heskett and B. Irwin; New York and London: T&T Clark, 2010), 95–107.

[6] Erhard Blum, "Jesaja und der דבר des Amos: Unzeitgemäße Überlegungen zu Jes 5,25; 9,7–20; 10,1–4," *DBAT* 28 (1992/93), 75–95; idem, "Jesajas prophetisches Testament (Teil II)," *ZAW* 109 (1997), 12–29, esp. 13–16. This topic was raised earlier; cf. the traditional treatment in Reinhard Fey, *Amos und Jesaja: Abhängigkeit und Eigenständigkeit des Jesaja* (WMANT 12; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1963).

interaction does not just simply indicate selective reception of certain texts in the book of Amos, but insists rather on continuity as the foundational notion in prophecy. From its very beginnings, the book of Isaiah has been shaped as a continuation of Amos's prophecy. Prophets, and their tradents who wrote down their oracles, never acted as individuals in ancient Israel and Judah or as religious geniuses in splendid isolation. They instead were part of a continuum of intellectual history that greatly influenced their own books. For the early development of the book of Isaiah, the Amos tradition seems to have been of special importance.

The third point concerns the reuse of Assyrian motifs in the book of Isaiah. In the aftermath of Peter Machinist's seminal 1983 essay, this approach belongs to the indispensable repertoire of Isaiah scholarship.[7] Machinist primarily demonstrated *the close proximity* of certain texts of Isaiah to Assyrian propaganda. Only recently has scholarship pressed further, attempting to understand the nature of this process of reception more deeply. A good example of such an investigation can be found in the work of Friedhelm Hartenstein.[8] Hartenstein's new insights concern the specific interpretation and transformation of the content of the Neo-Assyrian propaganda borrowed by the Isaiah tradition (see below).

The fourth aspect, finally, concerns the conceptual and theological differentiations within the alleged early Isaiah tradition. There is a long debate as to whether the historical Isaiah was a prophet of salvation or of doom. There are two

[7] Peter Machinist, "Assyria and Its Image in the First Isaiah," *JAOS* 103 (1983), 719–37.
[8] Friedhelm Hartenstein, *Die Unzugänglichkeit Gottes im Heiligtum: Jesaja 6 und der Wohnort JHWHs in der Jerusalemer Kulttradition* (WMANT 75; Neukirchen-Vluyn, Neukirchener Verlag, 1997); idem, *Das Archiv des verborgenen Gottes: Studien zur Unheilsprophetie Jesajas und zur Zionstheologie der Psalmen in assyrischer Zeit* (BTSt 74; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2011).

recent contributions by Hugh Williamson and Ben Sommer that deal with that problem and basically contend the difficulty of a clear decision.[9]

In the German-speaking realm, the discussion has been especially active since the publication of Uwe Becker's habilitation monograph on First Isaiah in 1997. Becker has been followed in his basic proposals by Mathjis de Jong and Reinhard Kratz.[10] Of special importance for all three is the assessment of Isa 8:1–8. The first four verses of Isa 8 are concerned only with a judgment against Samaria and Damascus. In the situation of the Syro-Ephraimite war, such a position amounts to an indirect prophecy of salvation for Judah, as it announces the defeat of its enemies in the north. It is only in the second four verses of Isa 8, in Isa 8:5–8, that Judah is also referred to as being doomed. This latter passage is introduced by a new introduction—"and YHWH kept on speaking to me"—which might raise the suspicion that this introduces a later addition. Becker, de Jong, and Kratz evaluate these findings in such a way that the historical Isaiah was originally prophesying doom only to Samaria and Damascus, and that the judgment perspective for Judah originated rather late in the development of the book of Isaiah, maybe even as late as the time of the Babylonian exile. According to this view, Isaiah was originally a prophet of salvation for his own nation, comparable to the Neo-Assyrian prophecy.

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[9] Hugh G. M. Williamson, "Isaiah: Prophet of Weal or Woe?" in *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela: Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (eds. H. Barstad and R. P. Gordon; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 273–300; Benjamin D. Sommer, "Is It Good for the Jews? Ambiguity and the Rhetoric of Turning in Isaiah," in *Birkat Shalom: Studies in the Bible, Ancient Near Eastern Literature, and Postbiblical Judaism* (ed. C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 321–45.

[10] Uwe Becker, *Jesaja—von der Botschaft zum Buch* (FRLANT 178; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997); Reinhard G. Kratz, *Die Propheten Israels* (Munich: Beck, 2003), esp. 57–63; Mathijs J. de Jong, *Isaiah among the Ancient Near Eastern Prophets: A Comparative Study of the Earliest Stages of the Isaiah Tradition and the Neo-Assyrian Prophets* (VTSup 117; Leiden: Brill, 2007).

In the German-speaking realm, this approach, at least regarding its basic conceptual differentiation as derived from Isa 8:1–8, has gained significant attention. In what follows, I want to challenge it and to present an alternative view. I do not think that the basic observation of Becker, de Jong, and Kratz on 8:1–4 is necessarily wrong, but to my mind its evaluation in terms of the literary history of the book of Isaiah is too simple. Taking into account the above-mentioned new perspectives on Isaiah, I think a more adequate understanding of the origins of the book of Isaiah is possible and necessary.

2. Isaiah 8:1–8 as Scribal Prophecy

Isaiah 8:1–8 plays a crucial role in recent discussions of the book of Isaiah, as noted above.[11] The first four verses are judged by many interpreters as a cornerstone of the earliest Isaiah tradition, primarily because of their close relationship with the circumstances of the Syro-Ephraimite war. But how "original" are these verses?[12]

Then YHWH said to me, Take for yourself a large tablet
and write on it in with a human pen,
"Belonging to Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz,"

[11] Cf. especially Manfred Krebernik and Uwe Becker, "Beobachtungen zu Jesaja 8,1–8," in *Sprachen – Bilder – Klänge: Dimensionen der Theologie im Alten Testament und in seinem Umfeld* (ed. C. Karrer-Grube et al.; AOAT 359; Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2009), 123–37; Reinhard G, Kratz, "Das Neue in der Prophetie des Alten Testaments," in idem, *Prophetenstudien: Kleine Schriften II* (FAT 74; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011, 49–70, esp. 58–61.

[12] On 8:2, see Becker, *Jesaja*, esp. 94 ("Zuwachs"); differently Willem A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12* (HKAT; Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2003), esp. 219–20 (8:2 as part of the writing on the tablet). Ernst Axel Knauf, "Vom Prophetinnenwort zum Prophetenbuch: Jesaja 8,3f im Kontext von Jesaja 6,1–8,16" in *Data and Debates: Essays in the History and Culture of Israel and Its Neighbors in Antiquity / Daten und Debatten: Aufsätze zur Kulturgeschichte des antiken Israel und seiner Nachbarn* (ed. idem; AOAT; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2013), 509–18, reconstructs an originally independent oracle of a prophetess in 8:3–4, which was only secondarily attributed to Isaiah through 8:1–2 (cf. also Kratz, "Das Neue," 59). While this is suggestive, it only becomes possible by emending the text. Knauf's essay contains helpful considerations nevertheless.

and I will have attest to it for me reliable witnesses,

the priest Uriah and Zechariah son of Jeberechiah.

And I approached to the prophetess,

and she conceived and bore a son.

Then YHWH said to me,

Name him Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz;

because before the child knows how to call "My father" or "My mother,"

the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away in front of the king of Assyria.

Two elements indicate straight away that there is a significant break between this *text* and the historical scenery with which it is affiliated. First, the *sequence of the text* differs considerably from the *sequence of events* in Isa 8:1–4: the events reported in these four verses cover a time span of at least nine months. This means that the divine mandate in v. 1, viewed from the chronological endpoint of the text in v. 4, had taken place long before. Even from the internal view of the text itself, the text is *markedly distant* from the events to which it refers.

Second, one should note that Isa 8:1–4, form-critically speaking, belongs to a prophetic narrative. The opening, "And Yhwh said to me," places what follows into a narrative context. However, at the same time, יואמר cannot represent the *beginning* of an independent narrative. Hebrew stories do not begin with a *wayyiqtol* except for ויהי,[13] so 8:1–4 must be part of a larger literary context. Interpreters generally accept

[13] See Walter Groß, "Syntaktische Erscheinungen am Anfang althebräischer Erzählungen: Hintergrund und Vordergrund," in *Congress Volume Vienna 1980* (ed. J. A. Emerton; VTSup 32; Leiden: Brill,

this conclusion. This larger context is usually found in Isa 6–7, or some parts of it.[14] That opinion is even shared by Becker and de Jong, who proposed that 8:1–4 was the original continuation of 6:1–8 (Isaiah's great vision) but without the mandate to hardening the people's hearts in vv. 9–11, which they consider to be a secondary addition to the preceding verses. Why do they exclude vv. 9-11? The reason, of course, is that they interpret Isa 8:1–4 as an indirect prophecy of salvation for Judah. Therefore, it cannot be introduced by a commissioning call focused on judgment. But this reconstruction of an alleged original call narrative in Isa 6:1–8 seems to be flawed, simply because of the imagery the text uses. The seraphim who have to protect themselves by using four of their six wings to cover themselves, the shaking thresholds, the filling of the temple with smoke—all this does not denote neutral circumstances of a theophany, but announces God's judgment. There is, however, an element of truth in Becker and de Jong's reading, in that their interpretation of Isa 6:1–8 matches the one given by the literary persona of Isaiah in the text itself: Becker and de Jong are somewhat comparable to the character Isaiah in the literary presentation of the vision, because *all of them* did not understand that implicit imagery of doom in Isa 6.

1981), 131–45; Wolfgang Schneider, "Und es begab sich . . . Anfänge von Erzählungen im Biblischen Hebräisch," *BN* 70 (1993), 62–87.

[14] Isa 7 will not be treated in more detail here because of the extraordinarily controversial nature of this text in recent scholarship. Cf., in addition to commentaries and the documentation of the history of scholarship up to 1992 in Jürgen Werlitz, *Studien zur literarkritischen Methode. Gericht und Heil in Jesaja 7,1–17 und 29,1–8* (BZAW 204; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), e.g., Becker, *Jesaja*, esp. 24–42; Wolfgang Oswald, "Textwelt, Kontextbezug und historische Situation in Jesaja 7," *Biblica* 89/2 (2008), 201–20. On the dates proposed by Becker and Oswald, see, however, Knauf, "Prophetinnenwort,"at 517 n. 33: "… but this does not mean that Isaiah 7 must be postexilic."

Odil Hannes Steck, a generation ago, interpreted Isa 8, to my mind correctly, as the application of the mandate to harden the hearts of the people from Isa 6:9.[15] This idea is suggestive not only because of its narrative and structural integration of Isa 8 into what has taken place in the texts preceding it, but also because of the literary form and the presentation of the content of Isa 8 itself. Why? This becomes especially clear in the depiction of the writing on the tablet: "For Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz." What do this act and text mean? It is remarkable how self-confidently interpreters have determined the meaning of this sequence.

Hans Wildberger, for example, puts forth the following:

> He himself [Isaiah] doubtlessly knew the meaning of the name. . . . Also the Jerusalemites, who knew Isaiah's stance on the current conflict, were certainly in a position to understand what the name was supposed to imply. The prophet could not limit himself to merely the pronouncement of the name because he wanted to call the people to judgment *now*, not only after a number of months.[16]

According to Wildberger, Isaiah "doubtlessly knew" what "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz" meant. And his audience too "was *certainly* in a position to understand." We all know how "doubtlessly" and "certainly" translate from academic into regular English; the terms usually stand for "there are doubts" and "I have no evidence for my claims." At any rate, what Wildberger claims is not stated in the text.

Barthel adopts a position quite similar to Wildberger's on Isa 8:1–4: "From the start Isaiah proclaimed the word of Yahweh and placed the choice of belief or unbelief

[15] Odil Hannes Steck, "Beiträge zum Verstehen von Jes 7,10–14 und 8,4," in *Wahrnehmungen Gottes im Alten Testament* (ed. idem; ThB 70; München: Kaiser, 1982), 187–203, esp. 199–203.
[16] Hans Wildberger, *Jesaja: 1. Teilband: Jesaja 1–12* (BK X/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972), at 314.

before his audience."[17] Here too, one can question how much the writing on the tablet with "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz" is really a choice between belief and unbelief. Alternatives are neither explicitly formulated nor implicitly recognizable in the writing on the tablet.

Beuken articulates a somewhat more cautious position in his commentary: "The reader must assume that this proclamation is connected with the threat of war treated in Isa 7 and known by the audience of the narrative, but the exact meaning still remains hidden."[18] Indeed, the meaning of the signs remains hidden in Isa 8:1–2—not because we no longer understand this meaning today, but because the text itself apparently willingly hides it.

This conclusion can be corroborated by looking at the closest parallel to "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz" in the book of Isaiah: the threatening oracle in Isa 10:5–6, where the word pair "spoil" and "plunder" also occur:

> Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger—
>
> the club in their hands is my fury!
>
> Against a godless nation I send him,
>
> and against the people of my wrath I command him,
>
> to take spoil (לשלל שלל)
>
> and seize plunder (ולבז בז),

[17] Jörg Barthel, *Prophetenwort und Geschichte: Die Jesajaüberlieferung in Jes 6–8 und Jes 28–31* (FAT 19; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 191.

[18] Beuken *Jesaja 1–12*, at 221; See also Steck, "Beiträge," at 199: "When one understands vv. 1–4 as events occurring in succession, then the directives for signs (vv. 1–2) aim at actions that are completely puzzling for the public, so that even the Jerusalem nobility needed to be troubled (v. 2). However, the meaning of these actions and, therefore, Yahweh's handling of this situation of distress only come to light after a number of months." See also Kratz, "Das Neue," 59. Following Siegfried Morenz, "Eilebeute," *ThLZ* 74 (1949), 697–699, Kratz interprets "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz" as a military term which was, as such, understandable. Morenz's parallels, however, are quite distant from Isaiah's time, and the message remains ambiguous.

and to tread them down

like the mire of the streets.

"Spoil" (שלל) and "plunder" (בז) appear here in the context of the judgment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. It is plausible that Isa 10:5–6 is related to Isa 8:1–4, given both the context of Isa 10 itself and also the choice of words in 10:6. The designations "godless nation" and "people of my wrath" are terms borrowed from 9:16 and 9:18, where they also appear as names for the Northern Kingdom.

Isaiah 10:5–6 form a comprehensible proclamation, in contrast to the tablet in Isa 8:1–2. Isaiah 8 contains a prophetic message with so much ambiguity that it actually becomes understandable only in light of the mandate to harden hearts from Isa 6:9–11. It does not formulate any alternatives; it offers no instructions to follow. Instead, it contains a combination of words that remain completely obscure in the context of their proclamation. It is only in vv. 3–4, which play out several months later, that their meaning becomes clear—but only to the prophet. Of course, it is possible that a symbolic act of Isaiah might stand in the background of 8:1–2; this act originally might have stipulated a clearer intention. But we simply do not know and, what is even more important, the text evidently was not interested in this aspect.[19]

[19] Barthel, *Prophetenwort*, esp. 188. It is possible that the witnesses named in 8:2 indicate a certain amount of distance between the text and its content. "Uriah the Priest" points to the priest who had the altar of Jerusalem remodeled after the example in Damascus at the command of King Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:10–16). Zechariah, according to 2 Kgs 18:2, could have been the father-in-law of Hezekiah (cf. Barthel, *Prophetenwort*, esp. 191). The witnesses take on a specific set of connotations, especially in light of Uriah: as one of the leading figures in the connection to Damascus, he especially might have witnessed the writing of the inscription whose meaning points to destruction for Damascus. Beuken's suggestion that the mention of the witnesses is one part of the writing of the message solves the issue of the difficult first-person pronoun in 8:2, but it leaves the text's meaning difficult to follow (Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, esp. 219–20).

With Isa 8:1–4 in view, another consideration with regard to 10:5–6 arises, namely, that these texts probably have some kind of inner-biblical exegetical relationship to one another. Scholarship has generally placed the oldest core of the Isaiah tradition in chapters 6–8, and therefore interpreted 10:6 as an "interpretive resumption ("Wiederaufnahme") of the name Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz," but the perspective of the text actually suggests the opposite direction of dependence: Isa 8:1–4 reworks Isa 10:6 in light of the stipulations of the mandate to harden hearts (6:9–11).[20]

If the narrative context of Isa 8 and the specific contours of the message on the tablet are read together, then the easiest literary-historical interpretation of these verses is that they were, from their very beginning, written with both the contextual and literary connections to Isa 6 in mind.

What are the consequences of this interpretation? The proclamation of judgment against Aram and Israel in 8:1–4 appears *literarily* connected from its inception to the proclamation of judgment against Judah formulated in Isa 6.

A further indication of the close relationship between Isa 6 and Isa 8:1–4 is the depiction of the prophet Isaiah himself in the events. After writing on the tablet, there is the mention of Isaiah fathering a son: "And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son" (Isa 8:3). It is noteworthy that this event takes place *without divine instruction*, and it is brought into connection with the writing on the tablet only later, when the son is named; that is, when *this son* receives the name "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz."[21] How should this be understood? It is clear that Isa 8:1–4

[20] Barthel, *Prophetenwort*, 241.
[21] It is possible that the puzzling term "human stylus" should be understood in this context. According to the depiction in Isa 8:1–4, Isaiah does not know that the words written on the tablet, "Mahēr šālāl ḥāš

intends not only to prevent the impression of Isaiah's knowledge of the events' meaning, but it also attempts to *establish clearly* that *Isaiah himself* plays the role as the object rather than the master of the events. He comprehends what the event was all about only after a certain amount of time has passed. What is remarkable is that the closest parallel in terms of content to this event is *also found in Isa 6*. In Isa 6 as well, the prophet only gradually becomes aware of the aspects of judgment in his vision. Isa 6 shows clearly that in this case as well the prophet functions merely as a divine instrument. This is especially clear in this narrative itself in Isa 6:8, in which Isaiah voluntarily offers to be God's messenger—obviously without knowing the contents of the message he will have to proclaim.

While Isa 8:1–4 displays a striking relationship to Isa 6, one fundamental difference between the two should be maintained, as has been emphasized by Becker, de Jong, and Kratz. Isaiah 8:1–4, as an oracle of judgment against Aram and Israel, indicates indirect deliverance for Judah. Isaiah 6, on the other hand, also proclaims judgment for Judah—that is, unless one were to follow the speculative and, to my mind, unlikely interpretation put forth by Menachem Haran that Isa 6 only speaks about the Northern Kingdom.[22]

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baz," will become a person's name. Cf. Isaiah's other son, Šear yašub, in Isa 7:3 (Konrad Schmid, *Jesaja 1–23* [ZBK AT 19/1; Zürich: TVZ, 2011], esp. 94): Šear yašub plays no further role in the book. Perhaps his name was added to the text at a later date only in order to make the meaning of Isaiah's message more monovalent—that Isaiah expected there would only be a repentant remainder—likely from Judah (cf. Isa 4:3–6; 6:13b; 10:20–22). Šear yašub apparently functions in the book of Isaiah in anticipation of Mahēr šālāl ḥāš baz (8:1, 3). Isaiah's message according to 7:3 of a holy remnant that repents, being just as important as the message of judgment of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Aram, also requires, therefore, representation through the symbolic name of one of Isaiah's sons. Cf. also Jesper Høgenhaven, "Die symbolischen Namen in Jesaja 7 und 8 im Rahmen der sogenannten 'Denkschrift' des Propheten," in *The Book of Isaiah: Le livre d'Isaïe: Les oracles et leurs relectures: Unité et complexité de l'ouvrage* (ed. J. Vermeylen; BETL 81; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 231–235; Odil Hannes Steck, "Bemerkungen zu Jesaja 6," in: idem, *Wahrnehmungen Gottes im Alten Testament: Gesammelte Studien* (ThB 70; München: Kaiser 1982), 163–64 n. 30

[22] Menahem Haran, "Isaiah as a Prophet to Samaria and His Memoirs," in *Genesis, Isaiah and Psalms* (ed. K. Dell, et al.; VTSup 135; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 95–103.

What can be concluded for Isa 8:1–4 from this discussion? Isaiah 8:1–4 should not be understood as a literarily independent entity, but rather as a text that builds on the backdrop provided by the oracle of judgment in Isa 6.[23] For this reason, as is also apparent in its narrative scaffolding, it probably does not end with v. 4. One should read on, namely to include 8:5–8, where the judgment on Judah is addressed:[24]

And YHWH continued speaking to me still, as follows:
Because this people has refused the gently flowing waters of Shiloah,
and rejoicing in Rezin and the son of Remaliah;
therefore, the Lord is bringing up against them
the strong and mighty waters of the river,
the king of Assyria, and all his glory;
and it will rise above all its channels
and it will overflow all its banks;
it will sweep on into Judah as a flood, and, pouring over,
it will reach up to the neck;
and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land,
O Immanuel.

[23] Cf. also Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, esp. 218.
[24] Nonetheless, it is not altogether clear to what 8:5–8 should be related. Haran ("Isaiah as a Prophet," 100) paraphrases the text as follows: "In the second stanza (5–10) God further says to Isaiah that, since 'this people', which is Ephraim, 'has spurned the gently flowing waters of Siloam' that symbolize the Davidic dynasty, and rejoices with the son of Remaliah, God will bring on Ephraim 'the mighty, massive waters of the Euphrates, the king of Assyria,' that shall 'flow over all its channels, and overflow and pass [even] through Judah reaching up to the neck'—reach only—and 'his outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land,' but nothing is said of destroying Judah."

Judah will be "swept upon and poured over" by Assyria (8:8), reflecting the rhetoric of Assyrian ideology. On the basis of the conceptual development beyond what appears in 8:1–4 and the insertion of "And YHWH continued speaking to me still," Becker, Kratz, and de Jong postulate that 8:5–8 is secondary. Against such a proposition, the conceptual extension of the judgment to Judah in 8:5–8 makes sense as part of the narrative plot development, and the expression "he continued and spoke to me again" is not a trustworthy indicator of redactional layering. This is evident from clearly unified text complexes such as Gen 18:29, Est 8:3, and Judg 9:36–37, which employ exactly this wording.[25]

If the arguments for a *composition-critical* differentiation in 8:1–4 and 5–8 are less than compelling,[26] then another observation should be brought forward that supports the opposite conclusion—that the texts share the same literary origin. Namely, the terminological and thematic reference back to Isa 6 is apparent in 8:5–8 as well (in addition to the proximity between 8:1–4 and Isa 6 shown above). Hartenstein in particular has demonstrated this connection. Even the simple catchwords "glory" and "full" steer the perspective back to Isa 6:3 (note also the use of "this people"). However, it is more important to pay attention to the thematic transformation. In Isa 6:3 the entire world is filled with the "glory" of *God*. In Isa 8:7 the "glory" of *the king of Assyria* impresses Judah, with כבוד here functioning as the

[25] Therefore, the formula in 8:5 is not "typically redactional" (contra Becker, *Jesaja*, esp. 103).
[26] In terms of its oral tradition, however, Isa 8:1–4, 5–8 is actually an entity that has been constructed of various elements; cf. Steck, "Beiträge," 188–89 n. 7: "Isa 8:1–8a is composed of, form-critically speaking, completely discrete parts—the report of a prophetic sign act . . . in vv. 1–4 and the prophetic judgment oracle in vv. 6–8. The two prophetic activities did not originally belong back-to-back. They were instead brought together by Isaiah in the process of writing, in connection with the memorandum ('Denkschrift') through v. 5, which provides the reasons related for their close linkage in the composition."

Hebrew equivalent for the Akkadian term *melammu*, 'radiance:' "Instead of Yhwh's 'glory,' Assyria's 'radiance' appears—God himself having given it space."[27]

Isa 6:3: And one called to another and	Isa 8:7: Therefore, the Lord
said: "Holy, holy, holy	is bringing up against them
is YHWH Zebaot;	the strong and mighty waters of the
the fullness of the whole earth	river,
is *his glory*."	the king of Assyria,
	and all *his glory*.

Finally, one should note that the oracle of judgment against Judah in 8:5–8 is not announced to the addressees, but rather *to Isaiah concerning* the addressees.[28] This, then, also assumes the lack of a possible communication between prophet and Judah—as inaugurated in Isa 6.

These observations show that both Isa 8:1–4 *and* 8:5–8 exhibit close connections to Isa 6[29] which, together with the shared conceptual orientation, points to a shared original context. This appears to be the case even if the phrase "the king of Assyria and his glory" might be a later gloss (which, however, need not be the case given the parallel mention of the "king of Assyria" in 8:4 and 8:8).

In terms of methodology, these observations about the compositional history of the early layers of the book of Isaiah indicate a certain dissociation between

[27] Hartenstein, *Archiv*, 11. Cf. Hugh G. M. Williamson, "'From One Degree of Glory to Another': Themes and Theology in Isaiah," in *In Search of True Wisdom* (ed. E. Ball; JSOTSup 300; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 174–95; idem, *Holy, Holy, Holy: The Story of a Liturgical Formula* (Julius-Wellhausen-Vorlesung 1ף Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008).
[28] Cf. Steck, "Beiträge," esp. 200 n. 50.
[29] Cf. also Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, esp. 218.

"Tendenzkritik"—the development of the ideological outlook of the text—and compositional criticism.

Becker's, de Jong's, and Kratz's observation—that the book of Isaiah preserves memories of the prophet's expectation of judgment for Aram and Israel in the time of Assyria's threat—is still correct.[30] However, the key text to a *composition-critical* reconstruction of such a layer containing judgment only against Aram and Israel, that is Isa 8:1–8, speaks more *against* than *for* the argument that such an indirect oracle of deliverance could have previously existed as a self-standing unit. Isaiah 8:1–4 is not an independent textual entity. It belongs both with Isa 6, including the mandate to harden hearts in vv. 9–11, as well as with 8:5–8. Of course, it is still possible to discern the ideological outlook of the earlier layer as an oral precursor to the current text,[31] yet we are not able to reconstruct such a text in terms of composition criticism, because it probably never existed as a stand-alone unit.[32]

So far we have seen that the topic of the judgment of the Northern Kingdom in Isa 8:1–8 has a certain *conceptual* independence, but that Isa 6–8 appear to have been bound together *literarily* from the very beginning within a broader judgment perspective that also included Judah.[33]

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[30] Angelika Berlejung, "The Assyrians in the West: Assyrianization, Colonialism, Indifference, or Development Policy?" in *Congress Volume Helsinki 2010* (ed. M. Nissinen; VTSup 148; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 21–60.

[31] Cf. Kratz, "Das Neue," 59: "Da die Weissagung so nicht eintraf, sondern Samaria erst zehn Jahre später als Damaskus fiel, kann man davon ausgehen, daß sie authentisch ist."

[32] The mention of the "king of Assyria and his glory" in 8:7 actually yields contrary results. The outlook of the text ("tendenzkritisch") suggests a unity, while the composition-critical method suggests a differentiation of layers (the king cannot really "overflow"). One should possibly evaluate the gloss in composition-critical terms as a later insertion, but it merely formulates what was already implicit in the broader context.

[33] Cf. already Steck, "Beiträge," 197: "In fact the demise of Aram and Ephraim and the demise of the Davidic dynasty are two sides of the same affair, they are a single act of judgment in which Yahweh provides Assyria not only as the proof of his reign on Zion against Aram and Ephraim signaled in the name Immanuel, but also against the Davidic dynasty, and according to 8:5–8 Judah itself will be drawn into this event as well."

Why is this the case? Why did the tradents of the book of Isaiah display so little interest in preserving the expected judgment against Aram and Israel as an *independent* theme, especially when this expectation really came true (which was the case in 732 BCE for Damascus and 722 for Samaria)? I am bracketing out the special question of how the historical Isaiah evolved from a prophet proclaiming indirect deliverance for Judah to a prophet proclaiming judgment, or if it was not he himself, then how his tradents reconfigured his message in this way. My interest here is simply the question of why the book of Isaiah passed on the message of judgment against Aram and Israel *only in connection, literarily speaking, with the message of judgment against Judah.*

3. The Judgment against Judah as Judgment again "Israel": The Prophecy of Isaiah as the Extension of the Prophecy of Amos

This question leads to a flashpoint in the theology of the book of Isaiah. It seems as if the book of Isaiah has laid its *entire emphasis* on the notion that the judgment upon Israel is not completed with the fall of Samaria and neither will Judah escape the judgment that befell Israel. Judah is, in some sense, also "Israel," as some remarkable reinterpretations in the book of Isaiah demonstrate.[34] One example is found in Isa 1:3: "but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." "Israel" here clearly *includes* Judah and Jerusalem. Another example is Isa 5, which presents a

[34] Cf. Reinhard G. Kratz, "The Two Houses of Israel," in *Let Us Go up to Zion* (ed. I. Provan and M. J. Boda; VTSup 153; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 167–179; idem, "Israel in the Book of Isaiah," *JSOT* 31 (2006), 103–28 (cf. idem, "Israel im Jesajabuch," in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; ABG 23; Leipzig: EVA, 2006), 85–103; idem, "Israel als Staat und als Volk," *ZTK* 97 (2000), 1–17; Nadav Na'aman, "Saul, Benjamin and the Emergence of 'Biblical Israel,'" *ZAW* 121 (2009), 211–24; Daniel E. Fleming, *The Legacy of Israel in Judah's Bible: History, Politics, and the Reinscribing of Tradition* (Cambidge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Wolfgang Schütte, "Wie wurde Juda israelitisiert?" *ZAW* 124 (2012), 52–72.

progressive fusion of Israel and Judah. According to 5:3, the song of the vineyard is directed to the "inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah," but the verse that interprets it declares: "For the vineyard of Yhwh of Hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting" (Isa 5:7). In this scenario Israel and Judah do not appear as equal entities; Judah is a part of Israel which, in Isa 5:7, comprises Israel *and* Judah.

Perhaps the most important theological insight and justification for the unification of Israel and Judah in terms of Isaiah's "theology of judgment" appears, in my view, in the poetic sections of Isa 5:25–30; 9:7–20; 10:1–4, which are held together by a common refrain: "For all this his anger has not turned away, and his hand is stretched out still" (cf. 5:25; 9:11, 16, 20; 10:4). As Blum in particular has pointed out, this text complex rests on the tradition of Amos, the prophet against the Northern Kingdom, and thus draws on the theme of judgment against Israel, reflecting its meaning for Judah.[35] The statement in Isa 9:7–9 [ET: 8–10] is especially crucial for the relationship to Amos:

The Lord sent a word against Jacob,
and it fell on Israel;
and all the people knew it—
Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria—
but in pride and arrogance of heart they said:
"The bricks have fallen,
but we will build with dressed stones;

[35] Blum, "Testament (Teil II)," 13–16.

the sycamores have been cut down,

but we will put cedars in their place."

Isaiah 9:7 explicitly recalls a prophetic oracle that has already taken place, as the past tense forms of the verbs indicate ("*sent,*" "*fell*"). What could this mean? Apparently there was a prophecy against the Northern Kingdom in view, which the addressees of "Ephraim," "Samaria," and also "the House of Jacob" suggest. There are hardly any other options besides the Amos tradition, and the hint to the earthquake in Isa 9:8—a central concept for Amos—and the subsequent context in Isa 9:12 (ET: 9:13) point to Amos as well:[36] "The people did not turn to him who *struck* them, or seek Yhwh Zebaot."

This verse is full of allusions to the book of Amos. That the people do not "turn" to God refers to the refrain from Amos 4:6–12; that God "struck" Israel cites Amos 4:9 (אתכם בשדפון וביקון הכיתי, "I struck you with blight and mildew"); and the reproach that Israel had not "sought" God responds to Amos 5:4–6:

For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel:

[36] Blum, "Testament (Teil II)," 13–16; idem, "Jesaja und der דבר des Amos"; cf. also Christof Hardmeier, *Geschichtsdivinatorik in der vorexilischen Schriftprophetie: Studien zu den Primärschriften in Jesaja, Zefanja und Jeremia* (Zürich: TVZ, 2013), esp. 83–85, who thinks more generally on allusions to Amos and Hosea. Uwe Becker ("Jesajaforschung (Jes 1–39)," *TRu* 64 (1999), 1–37, 117–52) casts doubt on the connections to Amos 4:6–12, because the composition-critical classification of this text within the book of Amos calls into question placing this text in the eighth or seventh century B.C.E. (127). The Amos commentary by Jörg Jeremias, whom one cannot criticize as frivolously late-dating texts, places Amos 4:6–13 after 587 B.C.E. (*Der Prophet Amos* [ATD 24/2 XXII; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995] esp. 46–56). This problem cannot be discussed here. Central for my discussion is the thematic connection to the prophecy of Amos that the refrain poem establishes.

Seek me and live (דרשוני וחיו); but do not seek Bethel, and do not enter into Gilgal or cross over to Beer-sheba; for Gilgal shall surely go into exile, and Bethel shall come to nothing.

Seek the Lord and live (דרשו את יהוה וחיו), or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

The reason for the reference to Amos is clear: the judgment that Isaiah proclaims against Judah is not new, but is an extension and continuation of the judgment on the Northern Kingdom of Israel that now is affecting Judah as well.

If the connections to Amos in the refrain poem are of decisive importance for the thematic focus of the early Isaiah tradition, then this is also the case, in my opinion, though less clearly but still in a remarkable manner, for the relationships of the great vision in Isa 6 to the visions in Amos 7–9.[37] There are individual elements, such as the quaking of the temple threshold in Amos 9:1 and Isa 6:4, which symbolize the inaccessibility of the sanctuary because of the judgment, and the parallel literary forms of Amos 9:1 and Isa 6:1.

[37] On the close connection of the fifth Amos vision to Isa 6 see especially Jörg Jeremias, "Das unzugängliche Heiligtum: Zur letzten Vision des Amos (Am 9,1–4)," in *Hosea und Amos: Studien zu den Anfängen des Dodekapropheton* (FAT 13; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1996), 244–56, esp. 251 and nn. 28–29. On the visions of Amos, cf. Ernst-Joachim Waschke, "Anmerkungen zu den ersten vier Visionen des Amos (Am 7,1–8; 8,1.2)," in *Ex oriente Lux: Studien zur Theologie des Alten Testaments* (ed. A. Berlejung and R. Heckl; ABG 39; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2012), 419–34; Georg Steins, *Gericht und Vergebung: Re-Visionen zum Amosbuch* (SBS 221; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2010); Peter Riede, *Vom Erbarmen zum Gericht: Die Visionen des Amosbuches (Am 7–9*) und ihr literatur- und traditionsgeschichtlicher Zusammenhang* (WMANT 120; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2008). A late dating of the Amos visions is argued for by Uwe Becker, "Der Prophet als Fürbitter: Zum literarhistorischen Ort der Amos-Visionen," *VT* 51 (2001), 141–65. The visions of Amos also influenced the book of Jeremiah, cf. Aaron Schart, "Die Jeremiavisionen als Fortführung der Amosvisionen," in *Schriftprophetie* (ed. F. Hartenstein, et al.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004), 185–202; Walter Beyerlin, *Reflexe der Amosvisionen im Jeremiabuch* (OBO 93; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

Most important, however, is the astonishingly similar *text-pragmatic* function of the visions in Isa 6 and Amos 7–9. Both Isaiah and Amos are concerned with showing the reader that the prophet proclaims not his own will, but rather the will of God. In answer to God's query of who will be his messenger, Isaiah responds of his own volition (Isa 6:8). The text suggests that the Isaiah portrayed in Isa 6 did not recognize the signs in the scene that pointed to a message of judgment. The grim task received in vv. 9–11 apparently surprises even Isaiah himself.

In this way, Isa 6 is comparable to the content of the visions in Amos 7–9. The character Amos only gradually learns, as the visions develop, that Israel's judgment is unavoidable, and that he cannot avert it in the same way that he was able to in the first visions. The text-pragmatic function of the text on the readers of his book confirms that Amos's message of judgment did not originate from him, but is imposed on him by God, as Jörg Jeremias in particular has highlighted.[38] Quite the same thing also becomes clear for the character of Isaiah in Isa 6: his message does not arise merely from his own will. The opposite is true: in the moment that Isaiah offers himself as messenger, he then recognizes that *his expectations* of what he would proclaim do not at all match *the message he is charged with*.[39] For the first portion of the vision Isaiah himself is the victim of the so-called mandate to harden hearts in vv. 9–11. He hears and sees God in the Temple, but he does not understand until after the end of v. 8 that God only appears in order to announce the judgment. Isaiah plays the same role for Judah that Amos had played earlier for Israel. Both prophets proclaim divine judgment against Israel and Judah, *against their own will*. This idea is also important

[38] Cf. Jeremias, *Der Prophet Amos*, esp. 97.
[39] Christof Hardmeier, "Jesajas Verkündigungsabsicht und Jahwes Verstockungsauftrag in Jes 6," in *Erzähldiskurs und Redepragmatik im Alten Testament: Unterwegs zu einer performativen Theologie der Bibel* (FAT 46; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 211–28, esp. 218–19.

for understanding the sheer existence of scribal prophecy in ancient Israel. Because the message and the prophet were dissociated from one another even in the initial phases of biblical prophecy (Isaiah's prophecy is not his message, but God's message), the writing down of the message as such was of utmost importance.

4. The Earliest Book of Isaiah: The Problem of Genre and Dating

What kind of book was this written book of Isaiah in the beginning? What genre would one assign to it? Recent scholarship offers several proposals, and I think it is possible to synthetize them to a certain degree, although such a synthesis does not result in an unequivocal answer. To begin with, Blum's proposal of the oldest Isaiah tradition as "the Testament of Isaiah" is quite appropriate for the content of this tradition.[40] The earliest book of Isaiah is a deposit of prophecies still awaiting their final fulfillment. However, it is probably more prudent to understand "Isaiah" here not necessarily as the historical person, but rather as the character "Isaiah" in the book.

Likewise, one could also speak, following Hartenstein, of Isaiah's book as "archive of the hidden God,"[41] though the reader—in the process of a certain "reader-elevation (through privileged disclosure)"[42]—naturally receives a sneak peek into this archive and into the enigmatic will of this hidden God.

Finally, Hardmeier's category of "opposition literature" is also appropriate.[43] The recording of the prophecy of Isaiah arose in large part because of its original lack of success and rejection.[44]

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[40] Cf. above, n. 3.
[41] Cf. above, n. 8.
[42] Cf. Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 179.
[43] Cf. above, n. 3.

How are these literary beginnings of the book of Isaiah to be dated? We have seen that Isa 8:1–8 reworks older traditions of a prophecy of judgment against Damascus and Samaria whose earlier literary layer cannot, however, be reconstructed from the present form of the passage. The literary presentation of Isaiah 8 seems closely connected to the prominent and pervading motif in Isaiah 6 that Isaiah's audience cannot, should not, and must not understand the nature of his message. Apparently, Isaiah 6 has shaped the literary outlook of Isa 8:1–8 from the outset, so the date of the current literary shape of Isa 8:1–8 is probably the very same as that of Isaiah 6, especially the hardening commission which has been treated and discussed many times, most recently by Reinhard Müller.[45] From my perspective, the interpretation, in its different scholarly variations, of a backwards projection of later experience is basically correct. The hardening commission is formulated after the fact. It has both Isaiah's proclamation and its negative reception in view and blends them.[46] Some scholars have located the hardening commission within the lifetime of the historical Isaiah himself. In this reading Isaiah reflects on his commission and its unsuccessful results at the end of his prophetic career.[47] This is certainly one

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[44] At any rate, the beginnings of the book of Isaiah seem to present a singularity in terms of genre for its time. Its theological shape had no clear parallels in the Neo-Assyrian material, and for this reason this piece of literature first needed to create its own literary genre. Cf. the discussion in Martti Nissinen, "Das kritische Potential in der altorientalischen Prophetie," in *Propheten in Mari, Assyrien und Israel* (ed. M. Köckert and idem; FRLANT 203; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 1–32; idem, "Prophecy against the King in Neo-Assyrian Sources," in *"Lasset uns Brücken bauen ...": Collected Communications to the XVth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Cambridge 1995* (ed. K. D. Schunck and M. Augustin; BEAT 42; Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1998), 157–70.

[45] Cf. Reinhard Müller, *Ausgebliebene Einsicht: Jesajas "Verstockungsauftrag" (Jes 6,9–11) und die judäische Politik am Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts* (BThSt 124; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2012), see also Torsten Uhlig, *The Theme of Hardening in the Book of Isaiah: An Analysis of Communicative Action* (FAT II/39; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), esp. 73–143.

[46] Cf. also Ulrich Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja. Komposition und Endgestalt* (HBS 16; Freiburg i. Br. and Basel: Univ. Münster, 1997), esp. 98–99.

[47] Cf. Knauf, "Prophetinnenwort," 516 n. 43: "Barthel has to invent the supposed 'connections to experience' in the text. The romantic interpretation of Isa 6* as an autobiographical text by the prophet opposes the fact that ancient Near Eastern autobiography, from the grave inscriptions to the Nehemiah

possibility. It is, however, probably a few decades too early. Especially the Assyrian material alluded to in Isa 8:6–8 dates from a slightly later time. Therefore, Isa 6 and 8 as a literary composition should be dated after 701 BCE,[48] which is of great significance for understanding its theological shape: The experience of the preservation of Jerusalem from the siege of Sennacherib in 701 BCE[49] created a serious problem for the Isaiah tradition. Of course, the events of 701 were a serious calamity for Jerusalem. Nevertheless, it was impossible to understand the events as the *complete* destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, as proclaimed in the prophecy of Isaiah.[50] Therefore, until the events of 597 and 587 BCE, the Isaiah tradition could have and would have been considered an unfulfilled prophecy, or at least one that had *not yet* been fulfilled. The situation of "Judah under Assyria" in the time of Manasseh was apparently a time of economic, and likely also cultural and literary, blossoming.[51]

Memoir are not interested in individual experiences and adventures, but in the documentation of action that conforms with specific roles in connection to the gods and the afterlife. Such a genre was conducive to the creation of a 'virtual prophet,' such as the scribal prophet Isaiah.'" On the notion of the "prophetic biography," see Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The Prophetic Biography of Isaiah," in *Mincha* (ed. E. Blum; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 13–26.

[48] Cf. also Knauf, "Prophetinnenwort," esp. 514–16; Berges, *Das Buch Jesaja*, esp. 92.

[49] Robb Andrew Young, *Hezekiah in History and Tradition* (VTSup 155; Leiden: Brill, 2012); K. Lawson Younger, Jr., "Assyrian Involvement in the Southern Levant at the End of the Eighth Century B.C.E.," in *Jerusalem in Bible and Archaeology: The First Temple Period* (ed. A. G. Vaughn and A. E. Killebrew; SBLSS 18; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 235–63; Lester L. Grabbe, ed., "*Like a Bird in a Cage": The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE* (JSOTSup 363/ESHM 4; London: Continuum, 2003); Ludwig Massmann, "Sanheribs Politik in Juda: Beobachtungen und Erwägungen zum Ausgang der Konfrontation Hiskias mit den Assyrern," in *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebirnâri* (ed. U. Hübner and E. A. Knauf; OBO 186; Fribourg: Universitätsverlag and Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 167–80.

[50] Cf. the discussion in Avraham Faust, "Settlement and Demography in Seventh-Century Judah and the Extent and Intensity of Sennacherib's Campaign," *PEQ* 140/3 (2008), 168–94.

[51] Hermann Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982); see also Steven W. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King!: Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (CHANE 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002); Israel Finkelstein, "The Archeology of the Days of Manasseh," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts* (ed. M. D. Coogan, J. C. Exum and L. E. Stager; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 164–87; Stephanie Dalley, "Recent Evidence from Assyrian Sources for Judaean History from Uzziah to Manasseh," *JSOT* 28 (2004): 387–401; Ernst Axel Knauf, "The Glorious Days of Manasseh," in *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (ed. L. L. Grabbe; LHBOTS 393; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 164–88; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "The Blackballing of Manasseh," in *Good Kings and Bad Kings* (ed. L. L. Grabbe; LHBOTS 393; London: T&T Clark, 2005), 248–63.

Therefore, the Isaiah tradition must have made an impression of untrustworthiness and unreliability. This historical situation would provide a plausible background for the hardening commission in Isa 6:9–11 and its satellite texts in Isa 8. Isaiah's message remained without hearing and understanding after 701 BCE,[52] and the Isaiah tradition coped with its rejection in the ways we can now trace in Isaiah 6–8 and which, at the same time, form the main origins of the book of Isaiah.

[52] Cf. also Hardmeier, "Verkündigung," esp. 240. This motif also remains prominent in the ancient reception history of the book of Isaiah, cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Opening the Sealed Book: Interpretations of the Book of Isaiah in Late Antiquity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).